



Topical Tidbits

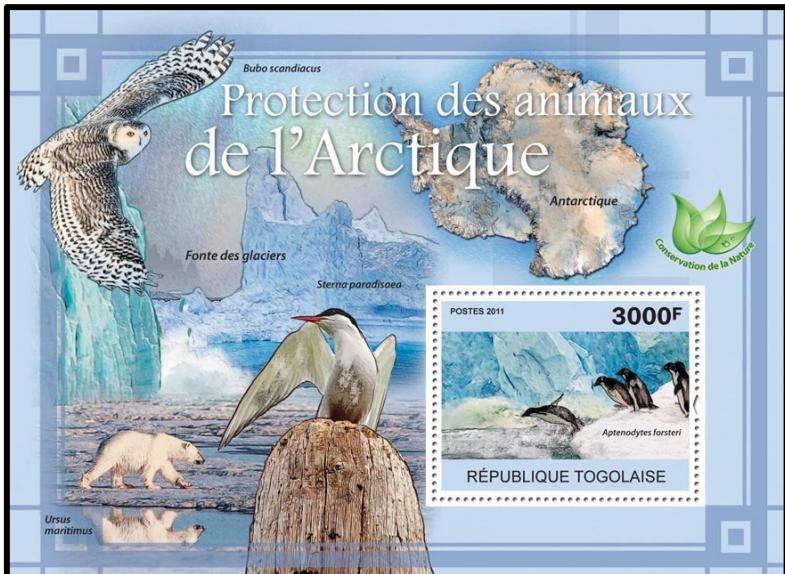
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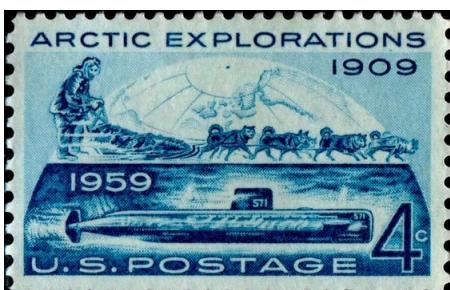
The Arctic

Greetings and Welcome to the Arctic!

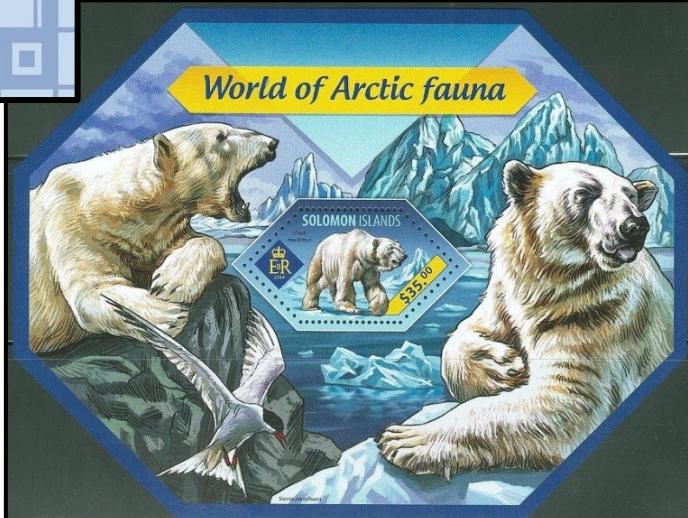


Even though the temperature can get as low as -94°F, about four million people call the Arctic home. Among these are the indigenous people called the *Inuits*. They have found many clever ways to survive in one of Earth's harshest habitats.

The Arctic is made up of the Arctic Ocean and parts of Canada, Russia, the United States, Greenland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland. It is located at the northernmost part of our planet.



If all the ice in the Arctic were to melt, the global sea level would rise about 24 feet.



Antarctica is made up of an ice sheet. Scientists were curious to see if it rested on land or water. In 1958, the submarine *USS Nautilus* sailed beneath the frozen ice of the Arctic Ocean proving that the massive ice sheet rests on water.



More than 5,000 species of animals live in the Arctic.

Arctic Explorers

The Arctic is located at the top of the planet and is home to the North Pole. Exploration of this vast area started with the Vikings around 870 A.D and continued through the late 1950s. Today many scientific expeditions take place to study the Arctic. Pictured below are just a few of the men who were brave enough to tackle this harsh environment. This set of stamps was issued by the USPS in 1986. See if you can match them to the correct description. Answers are on page 7.



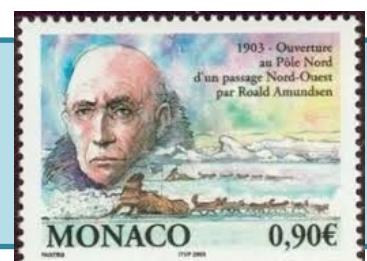
1. _____ Elisha Kent Kane (1820-1857) sailed his tiny ship *Advance* northward—perhaps close enough to see the North Pole itself. His stamp shows his ship sinking, after being damaged by ice floes.

2. _____ Robert E. Peary (1856-1920) and Matthew Henson (1866-1955) co-discovered the North Pole in 1909. Henson was the first African-American to explore the Arctic. Their stamp illustrates the two men trekking northward, using a dog sled.

3. _____ Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1879 - 1962) explored the Beaufort Sea—the last great unknown Arctic area. His stamp shows him carrying a harpoon and dragging his seal catch across the ice.

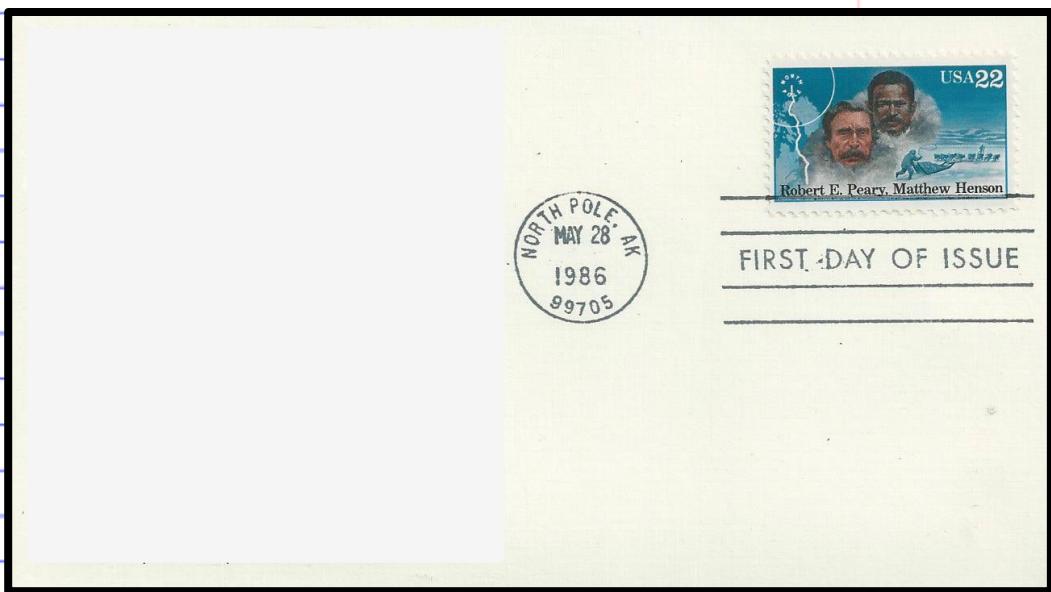
4. _____ Adolphus Greely (1844-1935) endured devastating hardships to reach a point that was the closest any explorer got to the North Pole for 21 years. His stamp pictures him and two helpers pulling a sled across the ice.

Roald Amundsen, a Norwegian, was the first person to visit both the North and South Pole. He was also the first to discover the Northwest Passage from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Explorers had been trying for centuries to find this passage.



Arctic Explorers, Part 2

Pretend you are an arctic explorer. Write a story about your adventures. Then decorate the left side of the first day cover at the bottom of the page to go along with your story. Be sure to share what you've written with a friend or family member.



Alaskan Tundra Animals



This sheet of U.S. stamps was issued in 2003 and shows the Alaskan tundra in the fall. Check off the animals below as you find them. Answers are on page 7.

- Common raven Grizzly bear
- Muskox Arctic grayling (fish)
- Caribou Singing vole
- Gyrfalcon Tundra swan
- Gray wolf Arctic ground squirrel
- Thin-legged wolf spider
- Arctic wooly bear
- caterpillar
- Willow ptarmigan (bird)

Polar Bears

Polar bears, the largest land predators on Earth, are found only in the Arctic. They can weigh between 900 and 1600 lbs. Did you know that polar bears actually have black skin? This allows the skin to absorb heat from the sun. A six-inch layer of fat under the skin insulates them from the extreme cold. Their coat is made of clear, colorless hairs. The hairs scatter light, making it appear white (or sometimes yellow, depending upon the angle of the sun).

DIRECTIONS: Identify the country that issued the polar bear stamps below. You may need to use a stamp identifier.

A partial one can be found here: <http://americantopicalassn.org/pdf/youth/introcollect.pdf>

Answers are on page 7.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



7. _____

8. _____

9. _____



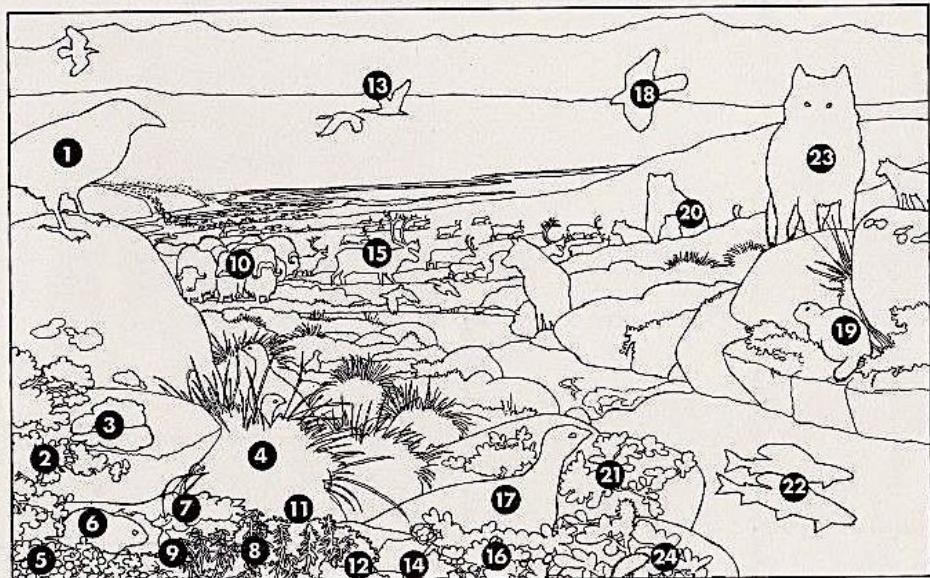
The Arctic

Answers:

From page 2:

1. A.
2. D.
3. B.
4. C

From page 4:



1. Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	9. Thin-legged Wolf Spider <i>Pardosa sp.</i>	17. Willow Ptarmigan <i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
2. Dwarf Birch <i>Betula nana</i>	10. Muskox <i>Ovibos moschatus</i>	18. Gyrfalcon <i>Falco rusticolus</i>
3. Map Lichen <i>Rhizocarpon geographicum</i>	11. Reindeer Lichen <i>Cladonia rangiferina</i>	19. Arctic Ground Squirrel <i>Spermophilus parryii</i>
4. Tufted Callitrichas <i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	12. Green Dog Lichen <i>Peltigera aphthosa</i>	20. Grizzly Bear <i>Ursus arctos</i>
5. Lingonberry <i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>	13. Tundra Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	21. Arctic Willow <i>Salix arctica</i>
6. Singing Vole <i>Microtus mivivus</i>	14. Cloudberry <i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	22. Arctic Grayling <i>Thymallus arcticus</i>
7. Singing Vole's forage pile	15. Caribou <i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	23. Gray Wolf <i>Canis lupus</i>
8. Labrador Tea <i>Ledum palustre decumbens</i>	16. Bearberry <i>Arctostaphylos rubra</i>	24. Arctic Woolly Bear Caterpillar <i>Gynaephora rossii</i>

From page 5:

<http://american topical classn.org/pdf/youth/introcollect.pdf>

1. Hungary
2. Russia
3. Greenland
4. East Germany
5. Switzerland
6. Belgium
7. Germany
8. Norway
9. Great Britain

Did You Know?

It was an Arctic iceberg that sunk the *Titanic*.



The USPS has issued three polar bear stamps.



2009

